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SUBJECT: POLES READY FOR A MORE ROBUST ROLE?

Classified By: A/POL-MIL COUNSELOR APAR SIDHU FOR REASON 1.4B/C/D

¶1. (U) This is an action request; see paragraph 7.

¶2. (S) BEGIN SUMMARY: As Coalition and Iraqi forces conduct active combat operations aimed at restoring security and the rule of law in Dhiwaniyah, questions over the mandate and approach of the Polish forces based in the area have arisen in Baghdad. The Polish forces in Iraq that form the core and leadership of the Coalition's Multi-National Division - Central South have hitherto focused on capacity building over active combat operations, but we have indications that the Polish contingent may be adopting a more active stance. We would value any additional information that Embassy Warsaw can provide on a possible evolution in the Polish approach.  
END SUMMARY

#### COMBAT OPERATIONS IN DHIWANIYAH

¶3. (S) Dhiwaniyah, where the Polish-led MND-CS is headquartered at Camp Echo, has been dominated by Moqtada al-Sadr's Jaish al Mahdi militia since last summer. Much of the city, the capitol of Qadissiyah Province, has been effectively a no-go zone, for Iraqi security forces as well as the coalition, since last summer's fighting. Recent months have seen an increase in improvised explosive devices targeting our forces in the area and rocket attacks on Camp Echo have caused coalition casualties.

¶4. (S) Coalition and Iraqi forces have begun conducting targeted kinetic operations aimed at breaking down Jaish al Mahdi intimidation in Dhiwaniyah. The operations are proceeding successfully; up to 40 Mahdi militia men have been killed and around 50 detained thus far in Iraqi-led operations. Among the detainees are two individuals classified as high-value targets. While Polish and Latvian forces are participating in the operation, the bulk of coalition combat power in this operation comes from U.S. Special Forces, embedded U.S. advisory teams, and some conventional U.S. forces diverted from Baghdad.

#### POLISH DCM DESCRIBES MORE AGGRESSIVE APPROACH

¶5. (S) During a discussion of the Dhiwaniyah operation on April 8, the Polish DCM in Baghdad, Dr. Stanislaw Smolen, told A/Pol-Mil Counselor that Warsaw has recently changed the "mandate" of Polish troops in Qadissiyah and Wasit provinces from "mentoring" and "instructing" Iraqi security forces to a "stabilizing" mission. He stressed the importance of this change from what he termed a "passive" philosophy to the "active and operational" stance now being taken by both Polish leaders in Warsaw and in Multi-National Division Center-South. Smolen said that this change of approach has been directed by Warsaw, where a new military commander of

the operational center has replaced a "very conservative" predecessor. (Note: In a recent visit to Al Kut, where Polish forces are based at Camp Delta, U.S. Special Forces told A/Pol-Mil Counselor that newly-arrived Polish units are much more active in patrolling and reacting to incidents than their predecessors.)

#### MINISTER LESS FORWARD LEANING

¶6. (S) Smolen's comments, which seem to indicate a new -- and much desired -- aggressiveness by the Poles contrast with the remarks made by Polish Minister of Defense Aleksander Szczyglo during his April 4 visit to Iraq. Szczyglo seemed to indicate to MNF-I's Commanding General Petraeus that Poland would like to switch its forces' mission away from security tasks to non-security stability operations and the training of Iraqi forces. Szczyglo was positive, however, about the prospects for continued Polish participation in the coalition.

#### ACTION REQUEST

¶7. (S) We would be grateful for any clarification that colleagues in Warsaw can provide on Poland's approach to military operations in Iraq. Are Polish forces are willing to take on more aggressive combat missions? If so, can Warsaw provide any additional combat forces to carry them out? This information would be useful in advance of the Coalition Conference that will be held by USCENTCOM in Tampa on May 1 and 2.

CROCKER